

Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

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Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Division

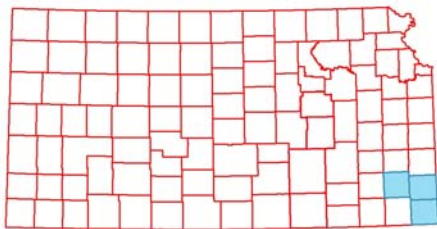
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It has been a long cold winter, but area waters are warming up fast, and I've already received many reports of good fishing. If you haven't already, I hope you are ready to get out and enjoy the many opportunities we have here in southeast Kansas.

Since the fall newsletter, I have been very busy with gill net and frame net fish samplings in October; completing fisheries habitat projects; attending training sessions and professional meetings; doing lots of maintenance work on boats, trailers and sampling equipment; and completing management reports and stocking requests. This spring we completed the walleye egg collection project, collecting over 89 million eggs from Hillsdale and Cedar Bluff reservoirs. We stocked walleye fry at Bone Creek, and will soon be stocking saugeye fingerlings at Crawford State Fishing Lake and Chanute City Lake as a result of these efforts. We certified 66 students in a Pittsburg hunter education class, and I have already provided four fishing clinics and aquatic education programs to area youth. Soon we will be filling fish feeders and electrofishing to sample largemouth bass populations. I know spring is here, as I am now receiving lots of phone calls to answer pond-owner questions about vegetation control and fish stocking.



Fisheries Biologists Use Fish Sampling to Predict Fishing Prospects

To monitor the health of fisheries and help anglers find the best places to fish, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) fisheries biologists spend most of each fall sampling lakes throughout the state. In October and November, gill nets and trap nets are used to sample all sportfish. The nets are pulled onto a boat and the fish removed. Biologists then weigh and measure each fish and record this information, taking care to get the fish back in the water quickly. Catch rates, length frequencies, and body condition are closely monitored.



Biologists sample, then weigh and measure thousands of fish each fall to determine management needs and inform anglers of the best fishing prospects.

Data from fall samplings is used for next year's stocking requests, recommendations for future length and creel limit regulations, and other management recommendations, as well as the annual Fishing Forecast.

2011 Pittsburg District Fishing Prospects

In general, the smaller, shallower ponds and pits will warm up first. Fish will be active and spawning in these impoundments a week or two before the fish in larger, deep lakes and reservoirs.

Crappie – The water temperature is already in the low to mid-60s, and crappie are moving in shallow to spawn. It's time to get after it. The highest density population of 8-inch and larger crappie was found at Neosho State Fishing Lake. The October frame-net catch was 70 fish/net. Although numbers are high, you'll have to sort through a lot of smaller fish for a good mess to eat. Only 6 percent of the catch was over 10 inches. Crawford State Fishing Lake and Chanute City Lake also have high numbers of smaller fish, with some larger fish mixed in. Bone Creek and some of the larger lakes on the Mined Land Wildlife Area have more quality-size fish to offer. Bone Creek frame-net catch rates are low due to the very clear water, but last year anglers commonly reported catching crappie 12 inches and larger. Nearby Bourbon County Lake (Hiattville) and Big Hill Reservoir have good crappie populations too, and would be good places to wet a line and have a good chance for some larger fish.



Stringers of crappie like this are possible in some of our local waters.



Largemouth bass are common in all our public lakes, and occasionally, trophies like this are landed.

Largemouth Bass - Bass are also now moving into shallower water to spawn. The best bass lakes in the Pittsburg district are Bone Creek and the Mined Land Wildlife Area (MLWA). Electrofishing in 2010 at Bone Creek showed 85 percent of the catch were 12-inches or larger, with 44 percent over 15-inches. In 28 Thursday Jackpot Bass Club events in 2010, there were 224 bass over 18-inches caught. The quality of the bass fishery is very good. All MLWA lakes have bass, but the best for big fish are often the ones that don't receive heavy fishing pressure. It could be worth the extra effort to walk into or portage into an overlooked or hard to get to lake. Chanute City Lake sampling showed good quality, but low to moderate density. Thirty-five percent of Chanute's sample was over 15 inches, and five percent were over 18 inches. Other nearby lakes with good bass ratings includes Bourbon County Lake and Big Hill Reservoir.

Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!



Fishing Prospects (cont.)

Channel Catfish – Channel catfish anglers are fortunate. Even though channel catfish don't reproduce and maintain their numbers in small lakes on their own, KDWP hatcheries produce plenty. In 2010 over 33,500 intermediates (8-12 inches) were stocked in the Pittsburg district. Catfish are plentiful in all our public waters. Neosho State Fishing Lake, Crawford State Fishing Lake, and Bone Creek Lake ranked the highest based on samplings last October. The MLWA also has a lot to offer, as each fall 14,000 fish are stocked throughout hundreds of pits. As seen in the photo below, and the fact that the state record 36-pound channel cat was caught in the MLWA, strip-mined lakes are capable of producing big fish. If you like river fishing and the opportunity to set limb-lines or trot-lines, the Neosho River and Spring River-Empire Lake complex offer some good fishing. Another good bet, and ranking excellent in the Fishing Forecast, is nearby Bourbon County Lake at Hiattville.



These trophy channel catfish were caught in a private strip pit in Crawford County on April 27, 2011. They ranged in size from 19 to 23 pounds. Live green sunfish were used as bait.

Blue/Redear – Bluegill and redear are common in most all of our lakes. Put a worm on a small hook a few feet below a bobber, and fish along weed lines, and you will probably be successful. Bluegill and redear are members of the family Centrarchidae, or nest builders. They move into shallow water where the male builds a plate-size nest he tends until the eggs hatch. The clearer the water, the deeper they nest. In strip-mined lakes, where shallow water is often restricted to the ends of larger lakes, spawning fish are not hard to find. Spawning areas are at a premium, and all the sunfish are forced to use the few suitable areas. The result is that hybridization is common, and you will often see hybrids of bluegill, redear, green sunfish, longear sunfish, and others. 2010 nettings showed Neosho State Fishing Lake and Bone Creek Lake have the best sunfish fishing. The MLWA is also offers great opportunities.



Colorful male bluegill will soon be building nests in shallow water where they can be easily located.

Spring River/Shoal Creek Fish Are Safe To Eat

Despite recent newspaper and television reports to the contrary, fish taken from Spring River, Empire Lake, and Shoal Creek are safe to consume. Clint Goodrich, who heads the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's stream biological monitoring program, confirmed to me by email that "The fish at the Spring River site have been clean, we have the data to back it up".

There continues to be a consumption advisory on mussels, clams and crayfish taken from Spring River and Shoal Creek. This advisory was established years ago because of lead and cadmium pollution and remains in effect today. The advisory as posted in the 2011 Fishing Regulation Summary is "Kansas recommends not eating fish or aquatic life from the following locations: (1) The Spring River from the confluence of Center Creek to the Kansas/Oklahoma border (Cherokee County) for shellfish (mussels, clams, and crayfish) because of lead and cadmium levels; (2) Shoal Creek from the Missouri/Kansas border to Empire Lake (Cherokee County) for shellfish because of lead and cadmium levels."

What does this mean? Get out and take advantage of the great fishing opportunities for catfish, bass, crappie and even an occasional walleye in Spring River and Shoal Creek. And don't be afraid to take them home to enjoy with your family. See Page 9 of the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary for additional details or contact Mr. Goodrich at 913-291-3676 .

City of Columbus Awarded Grant for VFW Lake

KDWP's Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) assists local communities in managing their public lakes for recreational fishing benefits. The program provides fish population sampling, fish stocking, payments for maintenance of their facilities, as well as a grant program for developments like boat ramps, angler access, fish feeders, habitat development, or other fisheries enhancements.

This year the City of Columbus was awarded a \$2,878 grant for a handicapped assessable fishing dock at their VFW Lake. Jim Burton, City Superintendent, has done a great job spearheading this project. When completed, it will provide vehicle access to the dock where anglers in wheel chairs will be able to easily unload and fish from a safe and convenient site. Total cost of the project is \$4,134.

The grant program provides up to 75 percent of the cost of enhancement projects. Cooperators can pay cash for their 25 percent match or use their labor, equipment, or materials to provide the match. Every CFAP cooperator in the Pittsburg district has taken advantage of the grant program at one time or another. I am currently assisting Bone Creek and Thayer City Lake administrators with 2012 grant applications.



Construction is underway on the handicapped accessible fishing pier at Columbus VFW Lake. The project was made possible through the efforts of Jim Burton, City Superintendent, and a CFAP grant.



Spring River Remediation to Fund Channel Catfish Stockings

An Illinois food processing company has agreed to pay a \$390,000 civil penalty to the United States to settle allegations that its Baxter Springs, Kan., processing facility overloaded the city's wastewater treatment system with millions of gallons of industrial wastewater, at times causing pollution along a 22-mile-long section of the Spring River in southeast Kansas and northeast Oklahoma.

Orval Kent Food Company, Inc., headquartered in Wheeling, Ill., must also spend at least \$32,500 on a project to re-stock fish in or near the watershed of the Spring River.



Large catchable-size channel catfish will be stocked in public lakes in the Spring River drainage when funds are received from the Orval Kent settlement.

Continued on page 5

Spring River Drainage re-stocking... continued

KDWP is set to receive \$7,000 from the settlement, and plans to utilize the money to stock public lakes within the Spring River drainage with large channel catfish (3/4 to 2-pound). Most of the stockings will be made just prior to major fishing events like the 4th of July fishing derby at Lincoln Park in Pittsburg, the Arma Homecoming fishing derby, and the Little Balkans fishing derby at Lakeside Park in Pittsburg. Lakes within the Spring River drainage eligible for stockings include Arma City Lake, Columbus VFW Lake, Frontenac City Lakes, and Pittsburg lakes at Lakeside Park, Lincoln Park, Wilderness Park, and Pittsburg State University.

The Oklahoma Department of Conservation is set to receive about \$20,000 from the settlement, and plans to stock striped bass and paddlefish in Grand Lake.

After EPA issued the order to Orval Kent in 2008, the company installed new wastewater treatment equipment and changed its manufacturing processes to reduce waste material contained in the facility's industrial wastewater. As part of the settlement, Orval Kent must conduct monitoring and reporting of its wastewater discharges to detect trends and help avoid future violations of the Clean Water Act.

I hope this newsletter has given you some interesting information and it will help make your upcoming fishing trips more enjoyable and successful. Another edition will be coming out next fall. I can then provide you with the highlights from our spring electrofishing fish samplings. Until then, best of luck to you. Get out there and enjoy the outdoors, and take advantage of the many sport fishing opportunities made available through your support.

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